

## Scientific data indicate positive trend in European fisheries

**Europêche**, the Association of National Organisations of Fishery Enterprises in the European Union, has welcomed the clear words from the scientific community and General Director of DG MARE, Lowri Evans, at the seminar on the 'State of Fish Stocks and the Economics of Fishing Fleets' organised by the European Commission.

The scientific data presented showed a positive long term trend of increasing fish populations and a reduction of fishing mortality. The panel explained that many stocks have recovered and have delivered stable and sustainable catches, highlighting that long-term management plans and consequent management over the years have been successful. Stocks such as northern hake and plaice in the North Sea and herring in the Baltic Sea were identified as success stories.

However, as Eskil Kirkegaard leading ICES-scientist, pointed out, there are still many obstacles to overcome since scientists are still unable to explain the situation with eastern Baltic cod.

"We have observed a decrease in fishing mortality and juveniles but in spite of these positive parameters, the stock does not grow," he said.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat, stated: "Fishermen will soon face a tough time with the first phase of the new discard ban coming into place in January with virtually no period of adjustment. The December Council will also be the first time fishing opportunities take account of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) objectives so it is essential that the positive trends and advice we have seen today in many stocks are translated into positive quotas."

The economist Anton Paulrud, Chair of the Expert Group on the Annual Economic Report of the STECF, showed clear results on improved economic data of the fishing sector in Europe.

Since 2008, the time fishing vessels spent at sea has decreased yet we have seen a significant increase in the landings, net profit and the income of the crew.

It was said that the drivers of such positive developments have been the recovery of the stocks, lower fleet capacity, good first sale price and stable consumer demand. Progress in energy efficiency and gear selectivity also underpinned the trend. Nevertheless the sector remains vulnerable with regard to rising fuel price crisis, loss of fishing grounds devoted to nature conservation and offshore wind farms, fewer young people entering the sector, reduced quotas and market saturation.

Whilst the performance of the large scale fleet has fared reasonably well, the small scale fleet of coastal regions are still suffering, with jobs and vessels slowly disappearing. Stakeholders emphasised the vulnerability of the sector, expressing that in the same way that there is a red line of biological safe limits that cannot be crossed, there should also be a similar gauge for the social and economic limits to safeguard the sector.

Source : <http://fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&ndb=1&id=71803> (06/10/2014)